

Toward Improved Creativity in the CIA

Internally, in the CIA the following elements seem to me important in diminishing our creativity:

- We do not clearly understand and distinguish the professional mindset of our various types of employees. In many cases, their extensive intellectual training and high degree of specialization lead them to seek satisfaction primarily in their professional peer reputation, rather than in the impersonal organization around them.
- Other employees, by dint of training and job tasks may have a greater personal commitment to the organization, with their focus sharply on satisfaction through an organizational career.
- We do not understand and adequately provide the necessary creative climate. For creativity to flourish, there must be a rather permissive climate within the organizational structure, with some autonomy for the creative individual. Most of our organization, however, is increasingly bound up in red tape and paper work, with increasingly structured and rigid rules of operation.
- As the Agency structure becomes more typically bureaucratic and impersonal, it promotes apathy, rigidity, unresponsive behavior and non-involvement by the personnel.
- There is a tension between organizational authority and professional authority. In the best of the professionally creative organizations, authority is based on personal knowledge, excellence, and expertise. In a bureaucratic organization, these qualities are supplemented by titles, power, and politics.
- In the conventional bureaucratic organization, the employee has to move up the line to obtain conventional authority; in so doing, he must give up the work for which he was trained, in order to do work for which he was not trained.

--The organization thus loses a competent, creative professional specialist and gains an incompetent administrator. Since the professional accepts the new job mainly for economic or status benefits, he may quickly cease to actively encourage creativity and professional excellence in the workers he supervises.

--We do not effectively understand the nature of managing a creative, professional apparatus that involves by its nature, a high degree of uncertainty. We apply clear-cut goals, exact schedules, and clear reports of projected results to situations that are not inherently clear-cut or exact.

Our professionals themselves contribute to the uncertain climate for creativity.

--Highly trained and specialized professionals usually have little preparation for understanding of the role and responsibility of management in a large organization. Even more serious, they often have little sympathy for it.

--Our highly trained and specialized professionals usually lack a full understanding and appreciation of the economic function and purpose of the Agency. Divergence between individual and professional goals inevitably occurs and the organization reacts with tighter controls. Frustration, dissatisfaction and lowered creativity follow.

The situation is clearly an intractable one; it can be ameliorated, but not fully solved: I believe the following approaches could be helpful:

--Studying and understanding more effectively the individual professional mindsets and motivational wellsprings of our professionals.

--Designing appropriate climates for creative work. This would mean stressing decentralized and less formal bureaucratic structure, with the greatest possible variety of opportunities for communication, interaction, and participation among professionals. It would mean less concern with personal "fitness" for an organizational pattern and a higher degree of individual freedom of choice in work focus.

- Establishing equally attractive reward systems for managerial and professional personnel. This would make it increasingly possible for some creative and effective professionals to stay in the trenches, rather than move to administration. The corporate world is solving this problem. The CIA hasn't as yet.
- Establishing appropriate training and sticking with it on a consistent basis to enhance the managerial competency of those professionals who move to administrative ranks. This training would include developing a more effective appreciation of the nature, functions, mission and purpose of the CIA as a whole.

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Approved For Release 2001/11/20 : CIA-RDP80-00473A000800010006-1

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